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NO. EA/TB

TO : Amembassy BANGKOK

INFO : Department of State
Amconsul SHIANGMAI
Amconsul SONGKHLA

FROM : Amconsul UDORN

DATE: April 11, 1972

SUBJECT : RTG Efforts in Nakae District of Nakhon Phanom

REF : Udorn A-18, 1971

pol 23 Thai

SUMMARY

In the past six months the RTA has initiated operations in the mountainous heartland of Nakae for the first time in recent years and the resources available to the district officer for communist suppression have increased. The RTG has, however, implemented only portions of the various special programs planned for Nakae under the general umbrella of CSOC Plan 1415. Evidence in the meantime has mounted that the insurgent strength and hold over the district's population are probably too great to be dealt with by RTG forces and resources now available in the district even if the recent increase in resources is taken into account. END SUMMARY.

INSURGENT STRENGTH IN NAKAE

Nakae District Officer Sanan Thanirat brought us up to date February 16 and March 17 on insurgent strength and RTG counter-insurgency programs in Nakae. He said that continuing RTA operations begun for the first time in recent years last December in the mountains of Nakae have turned up numerous base camps with a combined capacity for over 2,000 men. From this and other evidence he estimates armed insurgent strength in Nakae at about 1,200. He believes the insurgents have predominant control of the population in seven and a half of the district's eleven tambons.

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Comment: [redacted] there are about 400 armed jungle insurgents in Nakae so Sanan's estimate is probably high. [redacted] evidence, however, of 3,157 members of local Village Military Units (VMUs) organized in 124 villages in all eleven of Nakae's tambons. VMU members have been organized into village and tambon CT committees and the CT organization now goes upward from the village level to province and area committees. Some of the VMUs are also armed. Since June 1971 the insurgents organized at least eight anti-RTG demonstrations in Nakae and with this tactic were able to halt work on a dam on the Huai Chanot stream. They have also maintained a high level of assassination and intimidation. According to CSOC figures, the number of CT defectors is also decreasing consistently, indicating good CT control and morale. This substantiates Sanan's assertion that insurgents control a large proportion of Nakae's population. End Comment.

Sanan claimed that RTA initiatives since December have forced units of the Thai Peoples Liberation Armed Forces (TPLAF) to relocate out of range of RTA artillery and that some of the TPLAF have dispersed into five or six-man units with the mission of harassing the RTA. Local guerilla units have been instructed to "lie low" and concentrate on preventing RTG forces from using lines of communication as much as possible. The local guerillas' previous responsibility for collecting food supplies has, according to Sanan, been turned over to the TPLAF who don uniforms of RTG police and soldiers and rob villagers openly. Sanan said district officials are working hard to explain who the real culprits are. One difficulty in this is that one village chief has admitted to plundering villagers several times at the order of insurgents, thus lending credibility to the insurgents' implication of RTG officials.

Sanan claimed that a group of 90 TPLAF is advised and trained by Pathet Lao and one smaller TPLAF unit in Nakae has Vietnamese advisors while still another unit is advised by Chinese. He added that one Vietnamese national was arrested during the recent roundup of insurgent suspects in Nakae.

Comment: Sanan has stressed the role of foreigners in Nakae's insurgency during previous conversations as well. Although there are other reports of Vietnamese and Chinese working with the insurgents in Nakae, they remain unconfirmed. End Comment.

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RTG PLAN 1415

The RTG is aware of the threat in Nakae, though perhaps not of its full dimensions. Its response is embodied in Civil-Police-Military (CPM) Plan 1415. Not all RTG agencies concerned have completed their contributions to the Plan, but a good deal of progress has been made on it recently and it is being implemented. It contains a generally realistic assessment of the CT threat, CT methods and tactics and RTG weaknesses. The stated mission of the CPM elements is to work together to cut relations between the villages and jungle soldiers, improve public administration and services, and raise the villagers standard of living so as to overcome the appeal of the CT - all generally recognized CI tactics.

RTG OFFENSIVE AGAINST THE INFRASTRUCTURE

Sanan told us the roundup of 58 insurgent suspects in January (UDORN 09 repeated in BANGKOK 1702) will be followed with additional detentions on a small scale - five or six CT supporters at a time. Sanan told us that police from all over the province joined in the initial roundup and, although they received per diem, he felt obligated as their host to purchase food and supplies for them out of his own pocket. He noted wryly that he could not afford another large operation. Sanan said several Second RTA and province psyops teams joined other RTG forces during the roundup. Two continue to work in Nakae.

POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES

Sanan said he has direct control over 439 men belonging to the Village Defense Corps (VDC), Village Security and Development Units (VSDU) and Police Special Action Forces (SAFs). This total includes two squads of SAFs who are rotated every seven days with two fresh squads from the provincial SAF platoon. The SAFs and some VDC, according to Sanan, ambush along insurgent lines of communication. The provincial police and six Border Patrol Policemen (who teach at schools in the mountains on the border with Kalasin) assigned to Nakae are not under Sanan's direct control but he says the district police chief cooperates well. These police and paramilitary forces total somewhat more than 600 men.

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Comment: The police and paramilitary forces thus outnumber by less than one-third the 400 armed jungle insurgents plus an undetermined number of armed VMUs [redacted] are operating in Nakae. Even when the RTA battalion assigned to Nakae is added in, RTG forces have nowhere near the ratio of superiority commonly considered necessary to suppress an insurgency with roots as deep as that in Nakae. End Comment.

DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

ARD has agreed to rechannel all development funds earmarked for Nakae as a whole into the three and one-half tambons with some modicum of security left. Sanan said the theory behind this change is to steer resources away from villagers who are anti-government and reward those who view the RTG more favorably. Villagers in the other seven and one-half tambons have been told that the RTG will not repair public facilities damaged by the insurgents unless the villagers can demonstrate they tried to stop the destruction. Sanan noted that villagers already rebuilt on their own one bridge recently burned by insurgents and are reportedly recovering costs by charging a toll to cross it.

Development projects already completed include a new market in Nakae District town built with 250,000 baht raised locally, and a new fence around the district headquarters built with 100,000 baht from the provincial CSOC. Sanan said the Highway Department has been asked to build a road through the mountain valley running from VD4253 to VD1865 but the district has yet to receive a reply to the request.

Comment: It is difficult to say whether the rechanneling of development funds will have an adverse psychological effect on villagers in CT areas or not. It would tend to confirm CT allegations that the RTG is not interested in villagers' welfare, but may also bring home the point that allegiance to the CT has some cost to the village. Construction of the road requested by the province would certainly require the provision of security for the road builders; it may thus be premature. End Comment.

MODEL DISTRICT PROGRAM

Sanan complimented the police, civilian and military advisors assigned to Nakae under the Model District Plan for their help in getting action out of Bangkok. The priority given to Nakae under the Plan has also helped him obtain a full complement of

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capable deputy district officers, a rarity in the Northeast. His major complaint is that he has yet to receive any of the 300,000 baht budgetary supplement promised Nakae as part of the Plan.

Other special assistance promised Nakae has failed to materialize. Sanan now has radio contact with army units operating in Nakae, but Second Army has yet to assign a liaison officer to the District Headquarters. (The RTA liaison officer mentioned above works only with CSOC Bangkok.) Sanan says he has heard nothing recently about a company of SAFs, an Operations Coordinating Center and a Border Police Tactical Operations Center which are reportedly planned for Nakae. However, the Consulate understands that the SAF company is now being formed for Nakae out of units in Kalasin and Sakon Nakhon.

General Comment: Sanan, an expert marksman, is never without a revolver. He is the only district officer in Northeast Thailand who openly wears a gun at all times, a symbol of the insurgent hold over Nakae. Sanan is one of the most outstanding district officers in the Northeast. His past experience (see attached biographical information) combined with his natural ability and intense interest in his work are assets that the RTG should capitalize on by placing even more resources under his control. Sanan was more optimistic at this meeting than he was six months ago (see reference) because the RTA has finally become active in the district and he has resources with which to work. His satisfaction over RTA successes at disrupting to some extent insurgent activities is, however, tempered by the full realization that the RTG will have to do far more to suppress the insurgents successfully in Nakae.

Encl: Bio Information on
Sanan Thanirat

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Encl. to
A-2 of
April 11, 1972

March 1972

Biographical Information
Second Lieutenant Sanan Thanirat

Position	:	District Officer, Nakae District, Nakhon Phanom
Rank	:	1st Grade, Ministry of Interior.
Place of Birth	:	Nakhon Si Thamarat
Age	:	36-38
Marital Status	:	Wife is third grade nurse with Public Health Department assigned to Chonburi Province but officially TDY to Nakae
Education	:	B.A. Public Administration (Chula U - Class 5); District Officer's Academy, Class 7 (graduated first in his class).
Positions Held	:	1. 3rd grade deputy district officer assigned as Interrogation Officer, Muang District, Trang 2. Transferred to Community Development Department, assigned as Provincial Community Development Officer, Trang (2 years) 3. Transferred to DOLA as 2nd Grade Deputy District Officer, Mukdahan, Nakhon Phanom (7 years) 4. District Officer's Academy, Class VII 5. District Officer, Nakae - May 1971-Present
Travel Abroad	:	None
English Proficiency	:	Poor

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